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July 22, 2008

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To: Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
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From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

CHILD CARE POLICY

On March 3, 2008 a motion by Supervisor Knabe was adopted by your Board which directed the Chief Executive Officer to prepare a recommendation for structuring child care policy that would cut across County departments, Los Angeles Universal Preschool and First 5 Los Angeles, for the purpose of creating a more integrated approach to child care services. In addition, this recommendation is to address legislative solutions related to unspent child development funds.

I am forwarding the "first iteration" of the requested recommendation for your review and comments. The Office of Child Care, located in the CEO, has worked closely with the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable), to develop the attached child care policy. As a result, the Policy reflects the work of our internal child care experts and dedicated Roundtable members who have expertise in a variety of disciplines. The Policy is intended to provide an overarching and coordinated structure to address the child care needs of our:

- clients,
- employees, and
- residents.

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It is our contention, that by approaching the child needs of all three populations in a coordinated manner, we will be better situated to maximize current resources, as well as leverage and identify new resources.

Both the Roundtable and our office believe that a policy document of this nature would be stronger and better reflect the intent of your Board, if we were able to present it to County departments and community agencies and incorporate additional input. In addition, the Office of Child Care is continuing to research the programmatic and administrative issues which contribute to under-expenditures among subsidized child care program operators. It is our intent to incorporate legislative or regulatory solutions into the final Child Care Policy.

On July 9, 2008, the Roundtable conducted its annual retreat and the child care policy was the major agenda item. Key County department representatives and community stakeholders participated in the retreat. This event generated a new and positive momentum around the complex issues of child care availability, affordability and quality. We will coordinate a briefing with the Children Deputies on this issue at the end of August.

With your Board's support, this Office and the Roundtable will submit a final policy statement for your consideration by September 22, 2008. Please feel free to contact me, or staff may contact Kathleen Malaske-Samu at 974-2440, or via email at kmalaske@ceo.lacounty.gov.

WTF:MS
KH:KMS:gsj

Attachments

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Child Care Policy _Board Memo_071808

Policy on Child Development Services in Los Angeles County

When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. When we fail to provide children with what they need to build a strong foundation for healthy and productive lives, we put our future prosperity and security at risk.¹

Introduction

Los Angeles County is home to 10 million people and over three million households with children. These households include families of great wealth and families in dire poverty; families with two parents, single parents and unrelated caregivers; families living in dense urban areas and families living in sparsely populated rural areas; families coping with the trials presented by healthy active children; and families struggling with the burdens of addiction and abuse. As different as these families are, many share a need for high quality child development services.

High quality child development services² have the capacity to promote the healthy development of children from birth to 12 years of age, support parents in the challenging task of child rearing, and make it possible for parents to be employed, pursue education and/or training. Children with special needs and their families benefit when these services are available to participants to age 21. A growing body of research has documented the social and economic benefits of investing in child development programs. Positive child outcomes have been particularly impressive for low-income children and those most at-risk of school failure.³ In addition, participants in programs with strong family support components were less likely to experience child abuse, neglect or juvenile delinquency.⁴

Despite this information being commonly available, there continues to be a wide gap between what we know and what we do to promote the healthy development of all children.⁵ The Board of Supervisors is committed to mobilizing County departments and stakeholders from the private and public sectors to work across disciplines and jurisdictions to ensure that families in Los Angeles County have access to the services they need to build strong foundations for productive lives.

The Time to Act is Now

Prevention is more effective and less costly than remediation, and earlier is far better than later.⁶

Many County departments act as a safety net for children and families throughout Los Angeles County. Child abuse, juvenile delinquency, mental illness and poverty rob individuals and families of their potential to build strong foundations for healthy and productive lives. County departments, as well as hundreds of community and faith-based organizations, devote millions of dollars to treating these symptoms and still the problems persist.

Research from multiple disciplines has demonstrated that child development programs can provide the interventions needed to **prevent** these negative outcomes. In addition, various child development programs have generated cost – benefit ratios ranging from \$2.36 to \$17.07.⁷

New solutions to long standing problems are already operating in our neighborhoods, on school campuses and in our community centers. Regulations, eligibility requirements and a silo mentality have deterred efforts to integrate and maximize the impact of child development services. Over the past three years, child development programs in Los Angeles County have returned \$162 million in subsidized child development funds to the California Department of Education. During that same period, over 40,000 income eligible children and their families were waiting for access to subsidized child care.

Los Angeles County is committed to a policy framework that will support the integration of child development services across County departments and community partners for the purpose of ensuring the efficient use of resources and the effective delivery of services to children and families. To do any less, is to squander the potential of our children and jeopardize the future of all citizens.

The Context of Child Development

Our child care "system" is like a well-used crazy quilt – the design defies logic, but it can keep you warm if you know where the holes are.⁸

Currently there are over 3,000 licensed child development centers, nearly 11,000 licensed family child care homes, and very a large pool of unlicensed family, friends and neighbors caring for young children in Los Angeles County. The regulated system of care, while large, still falls far short of the demand.

In Los Angeles County, the location of child development centers is determined by the zoning ordinances of 88 individual cities. Similarly, each program is subject to city administered fire regulations and business licenses. Programs operating in the unincorporated areas of the County are subject to County zoning ordinances and fire regulations. By contrast, the County Department of Public Health oversees health regulations countywide, with the exception of the cities of Long Beach, Pasadena and Vernon. Child development programs (child development centers and family child care homes) are also subject to State regulations, administered by the Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) of the California Department of Social Services. As a result of the repeated State fiscal crises over the past ten years, CCLD on-site monitoring of child care centers and family child care homes has skidded from annual on-site visits to the current goal of a visit once every five years. In his proposed budget for 2008-09, Governor Schwarzenegger recommended further reducing on-site visits to once every seven years. The value of a licensing system that monitors sites less than annually is seriously diminished.⁹

While the regulatory picture for child development services is complicated – the funding situation is simply a morass. Major funding comes from public entities at the state and federal levels. In both cases, funds flow from the State or Federal government, directly to the child development program operator. The most notable exception is funding for California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program (CalWORKs) Stage 1 child care services, which flows from the California Department of Social Services to the County Department of Public Social Services.

Each funding source has its own eligibility criteria. Families qualifying for the federally funded Head Start programs are subject to the Federal Poverty Guidelines (annual earnings of less than \$21,200 for a family of four), whereas families with incomes under 75 percent of California's State Median Income (\$48,372 for a family of four) may be eligible to participate in one or more of the ten programs funded by California Department of Education/Child Development Division. For some programs, the parent must be working, in school or training, but not for others. Some programs operate part-day, part-year, while others operate 12 hours a day, throughout the year. Some programs only serve four year olds, while others serve children from birth to 12 years of age.

While the varying eligibility and programmatic criteria may serve the purposes of specific programs, the end result is that it is extremely difficult for communities to meet documented family needs, or use multiple resources effectively. Los Angeles County is well suited to promote a cohesive strategy for child development and mitigate the fragmentation of services.

Statement of Need

All I want is the best for my children.¹⁰

While a variety of circumstances can trigger a family's need for child development services, all families share a desire to provide their children with a good beginning. Similarly, all County departments have a stake in ensuring that County clients, employees, and residents have access to high quality, affordable and accessible child development services. Navigating the child development system can be challenging for any family and appear inaccessible to the most vulnerable families in this County. Los Angeles County is committed to establishing a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary child development policy that ensures all families have access to the services needed to build strong foundations for healthy and productive lives.

County Clients

- Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services serves as “parent” to thousands of vulnerable young children. Research has demonstrated that an investment in high quality child development and family support services can actually prevent child abuse and juvenile delinquency from occurring at all, support the healthy development of children and strengthen families.
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) administers the state California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program in Los Angeles County. CalWORKs is a cash aid program for low income families to meet their basic needs. Families involved in work activities or training are eligible to receive a childcare subsidy.¹¹
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health operates more than 50 program sites and contracts with more than 1,000 mental health providers to deliver a spectrum of mental health services to persons of all ages. However, services for young children have been seriously under-represented.
- The 80 kindergarten-12 school districts operating in Los Angeles County have developed various approaches to “close the achievement gap.” Districts must be cautioned to ensure that efforts to promote academic skills do not dilute efforts to promote initiative, self-confidence, and persistence in learning among young children.

County Employees

- Los Angeles County employs over 100,000 persons, many of whom are parents of young children. Recognizing the recruitment, retention and productivity benefits associated with employer-related child development services, Los Angeles County has established 11 child development centers for its workforce.

County Residents

- Fifteen percent of workers in Los Angeles County have children under the age of 13, and 51 percent of those children live in households where all parents work.¹² Working parents fuel today’s economy and their children will drive future economies.
- The Los Angeles Centralized Eligibility List (LACEL) includes 46,000 children of working parents who are waiting for access to subsidized child care.¹³ Very young children account for an increasing percentage of this population.

Action Steps - Opportunities for Leadership by the County of Los Angeles

Responsible investments in service for young children and their families focus on benefits relative to cost. Inexpensive services that do not meet quality standards are a waste of money. Stated simply, sound policies seek maximum value rather than minimal cost.¹⁴

The purpose of this policy is to:

- affirm the importance of evidence demonstrating the long-term impact of high quality child development services, when aligned with appropriate family support, on outcomes for many of the lowest income families and children served by County departments,
- acknowledge the critical importance of child development services to families who are clients employees and/or residents of Los Angeles County, and

- mobilize County departments and stakeholders from both the private and public sectors, to work across disciplines and jurisdictions for the purpose of integrating child development services into all efforts to support families and communities.

Therefore the Board of Supervisors:

1. Designates the Office of Child Care, in partnership with the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable), as leads to mobilize County departments and community stakeholders to integrate child development services into County and community services promoting the well being of children and families. In this capacity, the Office of Child Care and the Roundtable will develop policy recommendations for review and action by your Board, work proactively with County departments to integrate child development services, and continue to work actively with the wide array of community-based child development service providers who form the front line for families seeking high quality child development services to help assure their children's futures.
2. Directs the Office of Child Care and the Roundtable to convene child care and development policy experts and department representatives to assess relevant policies guiding expenditures, distribution and utilization of State and Federal child care resources in Los Angeles County. As documented in the Roundtable's recent report, Major Funding Streams: Child Care and Development Program Operations in the County of Los Angeles, 2006-07, major funders of child development services include the California Department of Education (CDE), California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Because there is little ability to "speak with one voice" to these funders, well-known problems that prevent full utilization of all available funding remain unresolved.
 - Directs the Office of Child Care, with input from the Roundtable, to summarize the results of these discussions, including whether and how a countywide mechanism could be developed to coordinate, prioritize, and problem solve to assure maximum utilization of all available State and Federal child development resources.
3. Directs the Office of Child Care and the Roundtable to convene representatives of First 5 LA, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and key County departments whose clients include families needing child development services and family support, to develop strategies for improving outreach, access, enrollment and integration of child development services with other County services for low-income families and their children. County departments should include Public Social Services, Children and Family Services, Mental Health, Community and Senior Services, Child Support, Libraries, Parks and Recreation, and Probation. Other local funders of child development and family support services should also be identified and encouraged to participate.
 - Directs the Office of Child Care, with input from the Roundtable, to report if local child care resources are being used effectively to leverage other resources, whether and how a countywide mechanism could be developed to effectively integrate local, State and Federal resources so as to assure the maximum utilization of all such resources.
4. Directs the Office of Child Care and the Roundtable, in conjunction with Chief Executive Office Intergovernmental Relations (IGR), County departments and community stakeholders, to advance public policies at all levels of government - local, State and federal - which seek to ensure that children and their parents receive the child development and family supports needed to build strong foundations for healthy and productive lives.
 - Directs the Office of Child Care, in conjunction with the Roundtable and other stakeholders, to recommend alternative administrative or regulatory guidelines, which support the intent of State and Federal funding for child development services, but which also allow for the much needed flexibility to fully utilize resources and more effectively meet the child development service needs of children and families in Los Angeles County.

- Directs the Office of Child Care, in conjunction with the Roundtable, stakeholders and Chief Executive Office Intergovernmental Relations (IGR), to incorporate those recommendations into State legislation or regulatory change.
5. Directs the Office of Child Care and the Roundtable, in conjunction with the Education Coordinating Council and LACOE, to prepare and submit a report benchmarking current County department and local school district involvement in the provision of child development services by December 15, 2008

End Notes

¹ *The Science of Early Childhood Development* (2007). The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. <http://www.developingchild.net>.

² *Summary of Essential Findings: A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy* (2007). National Forum on Early Childhood Program Evaluation and the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. www.developingchild.harvard.edu High quality center-based child development programs that have positive impacts on young children's development provide some combination of the following features:

- Highly skilled staff;
- Small class sizes and high adult-to-child ratios;
- A language-rich environment;
- Age-appropriate curricula and stimulating materials in a safe physical setting;
- Warm, responsive interactions between staff and children; and
- High and consistent levels of child participation.

³ *Reaching All Children? Understanding Early Care and Education Participation Among Immigrant Families* (2006), CLASP, www.clasp.org.

⁴ Reynolds, Arthur J., and Robertson, Dylan L., "School-Based Early Intervention and Later Child Maltreatment in the Chicago Longitudinal Study," *Child Development*, Vol. 74, No. 1, 2003, pp. 3-26.

⁵ *The Science of Early Childhood Development* (2007). The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. <http://www.developingchild.net>.

⁶ Knudsen, E., Heckman, J., Cameron, J., and Shonkoff, J. *Economic, neurobiological, and behavioral perspectives on building America's future workforce*, ed. Snyder, S.H.. The National Academy of Sciences of the USA, www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0606088103

⁷ *What Does Economics Tell Us about Early Childhood Policy?* RAND Labor and Population Research Brief, 2008, www.rand.org
Programs cited included:

Program	Benefit-Cost Ratio
Abecedarian Program	\$ 3.23
Chicago Parent Child Program	\$ 7.14
High/Scope Perry Preschool	\$17.08

The policy brief also summarized the monetary savings (or costs) from affected child outcomes:

Effect on Child Outcome	Monetary Benefits (or Costs) to Government
Reduced child maltreatment	Lower costs to child welfare system
Reduced child accidents and injuries	Lower costs for emergency room visits and other public health care costs
Reduced incidence of teen childbearing	Lower costs for public health care system and social welfare programs
Reduced grade repetition	Fewer years spent in K-12 education
Reduced use of special education	Lower costs for special education
Increased high school graduation rate	(More years spent in K-12 education, i.e., drop-out rate reduced)
Increased college attendance rate	(More years spent in postsecondary education)
Increased labor force participation and earnings in adulthood	Increased tax revenue
Reduced use of welfare & other means-tested programs	Reduced administrative costs for social welfare programs; reduced welfare-program transfer payments
Reduced crime & contact with criminal justice system	Lower costs for the criminal justice system
Reduced incidence of smoking & substance abuse	Lower costs for public health care system and from premature death
Improved pregnancy outcomes	Lower medical costs from fewer low birth weight babies

⁸ Quote from child care professional.

⁹ Campbell, N. D., et al, National Women's Law Center, *Be All that We Can Be: Lessons from the Military for Improving Our Nation's Child Care System*. April 2000. www.nwlc.org. Over a 10 year period, the U.S. military's child care system went from extremely problematic to exemplary. One of the factors contributing to the transformation was the development of comprehensive standards that providers had to meet in order to be certified to operate, and ensuring that these standards were met through a system of unannounced, quarterly inspections and serious sanctions for failure to comply..

¹⁰ Parent comment.

¹¹ CalWORKs eligibility requirements include:

- Reside in California and intend to stay
- Have children or are pregnant and:
 - One or both parents are absent from the home, deceased or disabled
 - Both parents are in the home, but the principal wage earner is either unemployed or working less than 100 hours per month at the time they apply for assistance
- Be a United States citizen or lawful immigrant
- Have a Social Security number or have applied for one
- Have a net monthly income less than the maximum aid payment for family size
- Provide proof of regular school attendance for all school age children
- Provide proof of immunizations for all children under the age of six
- Cooperate with child support requirements
- Participate in welfare-to-work activities
- Perform 32 hours of work related activities per week for single parent household or 35 hours per week in a two-parent household

¹² *The Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Los Angeles County* (2008). The Insight Center for Community Economic Development. www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

¹³ Reported by the Office of Child Care, May 2008.

¹⁴ *The Science of Early Childhood Development* (2007). The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. <http://www.developingchild.net>.